

Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 USIA-06 /016 W

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R 041205Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5207

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, BY

SUBJECT: VALUE OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IN BURUNDI

FOR CU/AF MARSHALL BERG

I REGRET DEEPLY THAT THIS EMBASSY CANNOT FURNISH YOU USEFUL AMMUNITION, AS REQUESTED IN YOUR 18 DECEMBER LETTER, IN DEFENSE OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM. OF COURSE, WE ARE ENTHUSIASTIC PARTISANS OF CU AS AN INVALUABLE (ALMOST UNIQUE) CHANNEL OF CONTACT WITH ASSORTED LEVELS OF BURUNDIANS, BUT WE ARE UNABLE CITE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW SUCH LINKS HAVE PRODUCED SOME PRO-AMERICAN PAYOFF.

THERE ARE TWO REASONS FOR THIS. MAIN ONE IS THAT UNTIL FY 1975, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN MUCH CU ACTIVITY IN BURUNDI, AND, INDEED, NONE AT ALL FROM 1977 THROUGH 1974. BEFORE 1972, THERE WERE 4 IV GRANTEES, THREE OF WHOM ARE STILL MINISTERS. TWO OF THREE OBVIOUSLY HAVE POSITIVE FEELINGS ABOUT THEIR TRIPS, BUT THIS HAS NOT DISCERNIBLE EFFECT ON THEIR LOCAL POLITICS. APART FROM THEM, ONLY PRE-1972 EFFORTS CONSISTED OF HELPING SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS GET TO THE U.S. SOME OF THESE WERE HUTUS WHO HAVE NEVER RETURNED: OTHERS ARE HERE IN MIDDLE LEVEL JOBS. THEIR MEMORIES OF U.S. ARE GENERALLY EXCELLENT, BUT THE OPERATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS FOR US IS MARGINAL, AND THEIR RESIDUAL LINKS WITH AMERICA ARE NEGLIGIBLE.

SECONDARY REASON FOR LACK OF CU PAYOFF IS THAT WE HAVE NEVER REALLY WANTED ANYTHING IN BURUNDI, EXCEPT FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUPPORT ON CRITICAL UN VOTES. LATTER, HOWEVER, IS AN AREA

OF HIGH POLITICS, WHICH IS WELL BEYOND SCOPE OF CU PROGRAM TO INFLUENCE ALL BY ITSELF, IN THE ABSENCE OF OTHER INDUCEMENTS TO THE REGIME TO REDUCE ITS OPPOSITION TO U.S. POSITIONS IN UN. APART FROM SUCH VOTES, WE HAVE HAD NO BUSINESS INTERESTS TO PROMOTE HERE: THERE ARE NO INSTITUTIONAL (UNIVERSITY OR MEDIA) TIES: AND OUR RELATIVELY MINOR PRIVATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CITIZENS HAVE BEEN MANAGEABLE WITH OR WITHOUT CU.

THE CONSCIOUS STEP-UP IN CU ACTIVITIES IN BURUNDI IN 1975 (RESUMPTION OF IV GRANTS, PLACEMENT OF TWO FULBRIGHT PROFESSORS, AND SEARCH FOR POSSIBLE UNIVERSITY LINKAGES) REFLECTS OUR VIEW THAT U.S. INTEREST IN BURUNDI MAY BE ON GRADUAL UPWARD CURVE. THE POSSIBILITY OF LARGE AMERICAN INVESTMENT IN EXPLOITING NEWLY FOUND MINERAL DEPOSITS IS FAIRLY HIGH OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, AND THIS ALONE WILL REQUIRE GREATER MUTUAL COMPREHENSION AT SENIOR LEVEL. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE BECOME MORE INTERESTED IN LAST FEW YEARS IN INFLUENCING UNGA VOTES, AND THERE IS ALSO MORE CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS IN SUCH DIRELY POOR NATIONS AS BURUNDI. WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES NOT ONLY HAVE HUNDREDS OF EXPERTS HERE, BUT THEY, ALONG WITH USSR, ARRANGE FOR DOZENS OF STUDENTS TO PURSUE UNIVERSITY LEVEL WORK IN EUROPE. THE RESULT IS THAT, TO THE EXTENT THAT YOUNG AND MIDDLE-CLASS BURUNDI ELITE HAS ORIENTATION ON AND THOUGHTS ABOUT OUTSIDE WORLD, THE LINKS ARE VIRTUALLY ALL TO EUROPE AND NOT TOWARDS US.

IT IS MUCH TOO EARLY NOW TO EVALUATE THE RENEWAL OF MODEST CU EFFORTS IN BURUNDI IN THE LAST 18 MONTHS. WE ARE CONCENTRATING ON TOP ESTABLISHMENT TYPES IN IV GRANTS AND ON ENGLISH TRAINING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL TO MEET GROWING BURUNDIAN DESIRE FOR WINDOW TO ANGLOPHONE WORLD. AS CU PROGRAM CONTINUES OVER NEXT FEW YEARS (AS WE FERVENTLY HOPE IT DOES), THERE WILL BE SIZABLE NUMBER OF OFFICIALS WITH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF NATURE OF U.S. PROBLEMS AND INTERESTS. IF, BY THEN, AS EXPECTED, OUR BILATERAL DEALINGS WITH BURUNDI WILL HAVE SOMEWHAT INTENSIFIED, WE WILL AT LEAST BE ABLE TO OPERATE AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF CU-GENERATED UNDERSTANDING WHICH HAS NEVER EXISTED BEFORE AND WHICH SHOULD BE VERY USEFUL. MARK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BUJUMB00090
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760042-0872
From: BUJUMBURA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760284/aaaacwca.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION CU
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <30 JUN 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VALUE OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IN BURUNDI FOR CU/AF MARSHALL BERG
TAGS: OEXC, BY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006